(c) if so, the details of the nations proposed/under consideration?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) India is negotiating Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations), BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) nations, the European Communities (EC), the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Japan, South Korea and Thailand. The Framework Agreements signed with MERCOSUR (Common Market of the South) in 2003 and Chile in 2005 also stipulate eventual negotiations for Free Trade Agreements.

(b) and (c) The feasibility of having bilateral FTAs is being discussed with China, Indonesia, Israel, Malaysia. Russia and a trilateral FTA is being discussed with MERCOSUR and SACU (Southern African Customs Union) jointly.

Delay in Scorpene Submarine project

1708. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether delay in operationalising the Scorpene Submarine project with French collaboration will deplete the present submarine fleet strength to a mere 9 by 2012;

(b) if so, whether Pakistan has already inducted 3 new French Agosta submarines and is accelerating the process of enlarging its submarine fleet;

(c) whether it is also a fact that China has a fleet of 69 submarines with one-third of them being nuclear powered; and

(d) what are the reasons for the delay in the Scorpene project?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) As per current assessment, there is no such delay in operationalising the Scorpene Submarine project.

(b) and (c) Various countries including Pakistan and China, acquire equipment including submarines for modernization of their armed forces depending on their perceived security concerns.

(d) Does not arise.

Operational unpreparedness of Prithvi and Agni Missiles

1709. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:
SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken note of the media reports regarding operational unpreparedness of the indigenously developed Prithvi and Agni missiles;

(b) if so, Government's reaction in this regard;